

Studded Tire History

Washington State law prohibited the use of studded tires until 1969 when legislation permitting studded tire use year-round was introduced and approved.

- 1971** WSDOT conducted a survey in December to get some idea of the number of Washington residents that were using studded tires. The survey was conducted at six locations in western Washington and nine locations in eastern Washington. The data indicated that 25% of the people in western Washington and 43% of the eastern Washington residents used studded tires. Of the people interviewed at North Bend and Cle Elum who were crossing Snoqualmie Pass, 44% had studded tires on their cars. At that time, WSDOT estimated approximately 30% of the vehicles statewide were using studded tires.
- 1971** Evidence of the damage caused to the roadway (i.e., pavement, striping, and lane markers) was collected and tested on the Washington State University test track. Because of the documented damage, WSDOT succeeded in having the use of studded tires restricted to the period from Nov. 1 to Apr. 1..
- 1974** WSDOT issued the following "Statement of Policy" to all states & local government:
- "Available information indicates that there is no net safety benefit to be derived from the use of present studded tires. This fact, coupled with the excessive wear and physical damage to the roadway surfaces provides a sound basis for precluding the continued permissive use of a convenience feature, which is effective for relatively short periods of time. This warrants State and local consideration of efforts to ban or limit the use of studded tires which cause more pavement wear than normal treaded tires".
- 1977** WSDOT prepared a report on the effects studded tires have on roadway surface's integrity. The following is a summary of this report:
- "Studded tires wear road surfaces at rates substantially greater than other tires. Most damage is in the form of rutting and reduced skid resistance. Such damage increases the potential for accidents caused by slippery pavements and by hydroplaning. Studded snow tires provide about a ten percent advantage over conventional tires in stopping ability on glare ice and hard packed snow. In all other situations, studded tires provide no advantage and even an 11% disadvantage on wet asphalt. It's estimated that there is compact snow or ice on our roadways only 1% of the time."
- 1982** The 1977 report was updated to reflect the fact that 14 states banned the use of studded tires. They include: Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Utah.
- 1984** An informal survey conducted in 1981 and again in 1984 indicated that studded tire usage averaged about 9% in Western Washington and about 25% in Eastern Washington.
- 1984** WSDOT prepared and submitted legislation to ban the use of studded tires. The legislation did not pass.
- 1987** WSDOT prepared a position paper regarding studded tires. The purpose of the document was to provide updated information about the relative merits and impacts of studded tire use. Once again, the department submitted legislation to ban the use of studded tires. The bid did not pass.

- 1990** For three years, the department opted not to pursue legislation to ban the use of studded tires. With improved all-weather traction tires on the market and after a survey indicating a decline of studded tire sales, it was assumed that the problem might eventually solve itself.
- 1991** Representative Winsley sponsored HB 1154 which would have banned studded tires. The bill was amended to impose a \$25 tax on each studded tire sold. The legislation did not pass.
- 1993** Senator Winsley sponsored SB 5151, which would have banned studded tires. The bill was amended to impose a \$25 tax on each studded tire sold. The legislation did not pass.
- 1994** SB 5151 went back to its original language. The department and the Washington State Patrol (WSP) testified in favor of the bill. The bill was amended to impose an annual permit fee of \$8 per tire. The Department of Licensing would issue stickers to be placed in the windshield of automobiles using studded tires. The legislation did not pass.
- Representative Heavey introduced HB 2233 which would outlaw studs west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains unless it is snowing in western Washington. WSP testified against the bill because of enforcement. The bill did not pass.
- 1995** Senator Heavey sponsored SB 5568, which defined a lightweight stud (50% lighter than today's studs) and when the lightweight studs would go into effect. The claim was that lightweight studs do half the damage of regular steel studs but the bill never made it passed the committee.
- 1996** Senator Heavey continued to sponsor SB 5568 but the results were the same as the previous year.
- 1997** Senator Heavey introduced SB 5250, which resembled the bill of 1996, but the studs were said to be only 35% lighter than the standard stud.
- 1998** WSDOT requested legislation for a 15% lighter stud. The request died in Rules Committee.
- 1999** WSDOT requested legislation for a 15% lighter stud. The bill passed and became a law May 7, 1999.
- 2000** No legislation.
- 2001** Due to Blue Ribbon recommendations, legislation was introduced to place a \$15 fee on each studded tire sold after July 2001. A second bill was introduced that would have reduced the length of time studs could be used to Dec. through Feb. Neither bill passed.
- 2002** No legislation.
- 2003** Legislation proposed to enact a \$15 fee per studded tire. The proposal did not make it out of committee.
- WSDOT engaged in discussions with the tire industry to find common ground in order to move forward together. WSDOT also completed a public opinion survey on the use of studded tires.

Washington State Transportation Commission recommended that the legislature consider a ban on studded tires during their 2004 session.